TORCH

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February 1997

Basic Military Training

Discipline and Safety for the Future

TORCH

The Torch is symbolic of Education and Learning

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FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

Flight Safety

Ground/Weapons Safety

by SrA Andrew N. Dunaway II, CC

Please proportionally reduce this month's cover to fit this box. Delete this text and box.

About the Cover

A Training Instructor (TI) leads his graduating airman into their future with the Air Force. Photo by MSgt Dave Nolan.

by Maj Mark Carter
photos by
MSgt Dave Nolan

Basic Military Training (BMT) — celebrating its 50th anniversary this year in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Air Force — evokes various emotions depending on time and memory. During their stay at Lackland AFB in San Antonio, few airmen would probably consider the experience a fun time, but with time and life-experience usually comes the realization that BMT was a useful and necessary lesson in discipline, detail, and safety — a key to changing the way many people look at life and think about their futures . . .changing youths, sometimes lost, into capable and confident young men and women ready to serve their country. And for many of these young airmen, BMT is largely responsible for replacing attitudes of "oh well,

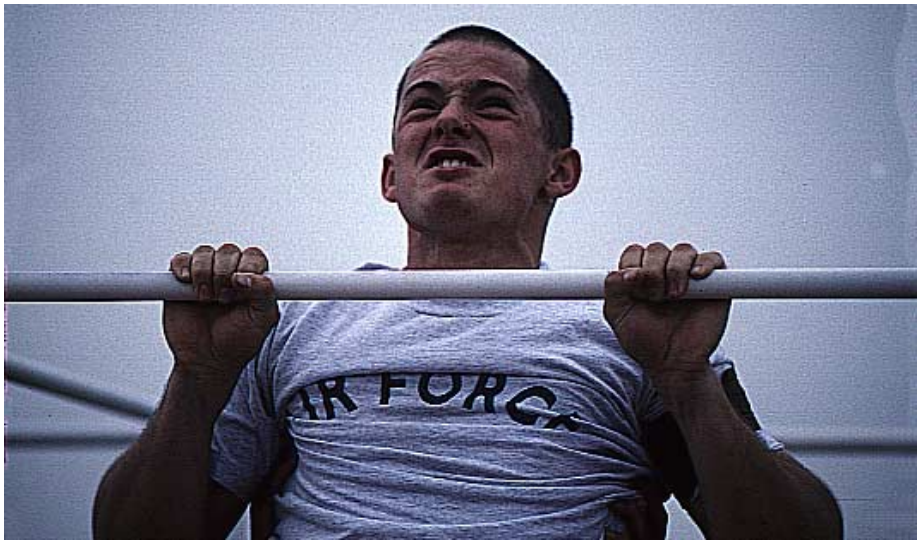
BMT
tary Training

it's just a job" with "it's my job; it's got to be done right, and it's got to be done safely."

Now some may complain BMT isn't what it used to be: the training is softer; the discipline is softer; the airmen are softer. But as SMSgt Harry Creacy, Superintendent of Training for the 323rd TRS (affectionately known as the House of Pain), proudly makes clear, no one graduates from BMT without earning the honor, and as he quickly adds, "BMT has changed somewhat because of the changing times and requirements, but the basic requirements haven't changed — we still produce the best possible people for the Air Force we can."

While the discipline people have come to expect from BMT is still present, the emphasis, according to Creacy, is now more clearly centered on teaching, interacting with the students and providing role models, rather than just telling the recruits to do something. Creacy says the Training Instructors (TIs) work to instill the understanding that folding a T-shirt to exact specifications is not just an exercise in basic harassment (as many may see it at the time); instead, it's all about paying attention to detail — an exercise in realizing everything the individual does has consequences for not just that individual but for his or her co-workers, the team, as well. Inattention to detail can lead to a breakdown in teamwork which can have dire consequences for the unit, the Air Force, and the country, so one of BMT's main goals is to teach recruits what is all too often an initially foreign respect for the details.

"No one graduates from BMT without earning the honor. . ."



Lackland Laser flashlights in hand, the rainbows start their first full day of their new lives.

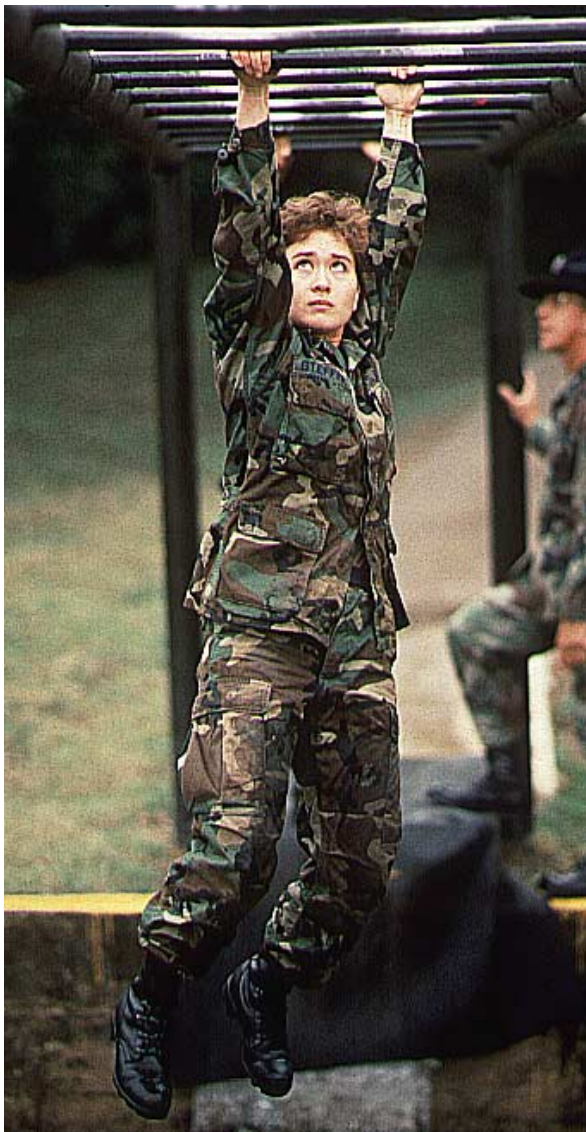
According to SSgt Christopher Young, a TI with the 323rd, BMT's balance between discipline and teaching, centered on attention to detail in all things, places special emphasis on safety. "We make it clear from the beginning," says Young, "they cannot graduate from a hospital bed."

This emphasis on safety runs deeper than the traditional outward signs of a concern for safety such as road guards, the trademark "Lackland Laser" flashlights, and confidence course observers, although these are still integral parts of the program. Safety shows its presence in virtually every aspect of BMT from the moment the rainbows, a term of "endearment" based on the uncoordinated appearance of new recruits, arrive at Lackland to their graduation six weeks

later. To ensure the safety of all the trainees in this new and stressful environment — for some, this is the first time they've been away from home — the TIs are constantly with the rainbows during their first 48 hours of their new lives. The recruits are taught to drink sufficient water to prevent dehydration during the stressful and demanding training, and they almost always carry canteens of water with them. Stairwell guards are used to ensure everyone uses the handrails on the stairs. Recruits are constantly monitored during physical training for signs of physical and heat exhaustion. Fire drills with head counts are a common occurrence, and to add emphasis to the fact that safety is not something which just concerns the TIs, the dorm chief, a recruit, is the immediate safety chief. Some of these things may seem trivial, but again, it's the small things, the details and the attention the individual pays those details, which determine the safety of the individual and the team.

"Before, during, and after people use the course, safety is our main concern."

Perhaps the most potentially dangerous activity the recruits participate in is the confidence course, but then especially, as TSgt Steve Baston, a course supervisor with the 737th TRSS, says, "Before, during, and after people use the course, safety is our main concern." Supervisors almost constantly patrol the course for potential hazards ranging from broken equipment to wildlife (they have several trophy rattlers on display). Course users are always given a shakedown before the run to eliminate



"They want the recruits to see safety in the broader view—how does safety affect the Air Force and its mission—by emphasizing safety in virtually every aspect of the recruits' lives."

any personal items which could cause safety hazards, and they are always given an extensive pre-run safety briefing which highlights safety concerns and discusses safe techniques for overcoming each obstacle and trail dangers to be on the lookout for; each obstacle is supervised, and the supervisors don't hesitate to call a halt should they see unsafe behavior of any kind; and medical treatment is always readily available during each run. Hazard identification and awareness have turned a run over and through some potentially hazardous obstacles into a risk-managed exercise in confidence-building which has resulted in very few serious injuries over the years.

But one of the goals of BMT is to move safety beyond the realm of the individual activity and into the realm of the effect of safety or safety awareness on lifestyles in general. They want the recruits to see safety in the broader view—how does safety affect the Air Force and its mission—by emphasizing safety in virtually every aspect of the recruits' lives. If recruits start thinking more about safety and the impact hazards can have on their lives and the Air Force mission, they will carry that awareness from BMT out into the rest of the Air Force, helping to make the Air Force more pro-active about risk management.

BMT has clearly moved from being reactive to being pro-active in its safety analysis. According to SMSgt Creacy, virtually all activities and programs at the 323rd, established or new, are now subject to a three point test: ***1) a common sense test****—does the activity/program make sense, or are we going too far or not far enough;* ***2) a quality of life test****—what will be the effect of this activity/program, on the way our recruits and/or our instructors live;* ***3) the safety test****—what potential hazards come with the activity/program, and are the gains worth the risks.*

BMT must obviously meet its objectives, producing quality Air Force people, but individual opinion regarding how those objectives should be met still counts. The organization

relies on experience across the ranks to determine the best and safest ways to meet those objectives.

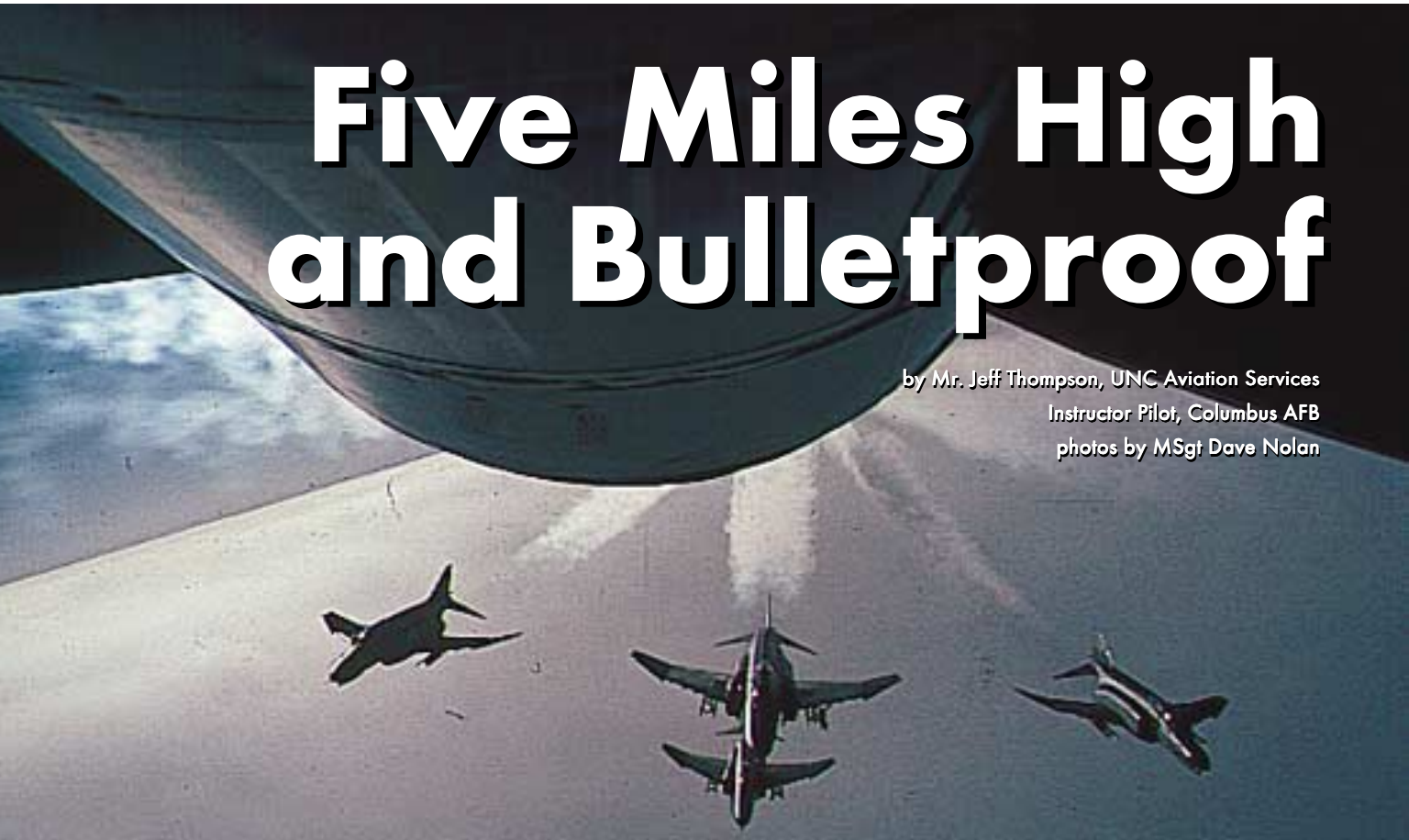
Discipline, instruction, teamwork, and safety are all clearly alive and well at Basic Military Training, but while today's methods may be different from what instructors used in the days of old, SMSgt Creacy makes no bones about who built the foundation for the training group as it exists today: "Those who came before us were heroes because they set the basis for where we are now. Without them and their contributions to the Air Force and this country, who knows where we would be today. Their methods were somewhat different because the times were different and the basics were different, but they did the job as it needed to be done."

Future generations will certainly look back with the same pride on today's BMT and the men and women who train there.

SSgt Christopher Young "discusses" a problem with an Air Force recruit.

Five Miles High and Bulletproof

by Mr. Jeff Thompson, UNC Aviation Services
Instructor Pilot, Columbus AFB
photos by MSgt Dave Nolan



I'm sure you've heard plenty of "There I was" stories, but how many "Where was I?" stories have you heard?

Sunday afternoon—we were at FL330 (33,000 ft) trying to top or skirt a thunderstorm, part of a long line running North to South along the East coast. . .four F-4's trying to get home after a weekend cross-country. Our Director of Operations wanted the birds home by 1700 to get ready for Monday's normally heavy training schedule, and since he'd been nice enough to let us get away for the weekend, we were doing our best to meet his request. Four instructor pilots (IPs) and four instructor weapon systems officers (IWSOs) in four good jets—what could go wrong?

Anyhow, based on our preliminary weather brief before take-off, we'd delayed, checked again, figured every angle—everything we could think of to make it happen. As it worked out, the day dragged on until Lead finally called our command post to fill them in—we'd be late, but we'd make it.

At about 1600, we stepped, breaking ground in two-by-two formation using radar trail procedures. We joined up at FL250 after climbing through heavy weather, rain and all that goes with it,

only to see a pilot's worst thunderstorm nightmare running all the way to Cuba. We started threading our way between thunderstorms as we headed towards home, but things weren't looking or sounding good.

Lead had been off frequency talking to weather METRO, and he decided we should break up into two two-ships and divert into an East coast TAC (now ACC) base. Weather there was circling minimums and forecast to get worse, going to heavy rain with deep, standing water on the runway and strong, gusty winds. . .Great! The only good news was the PAR and ILS were up, plus the runway had arresting cables at both ends and at mid-field, meaning we could trap a jet at each end of the runway and at mid-field if we had to. Incidentally, our #3 ship called low on fuel, and my fuel state was none too fat either.

Meanwhile, my normally very good formation skills were being put to the test, as in I'm so close I can read Lead's instruments between lightning flashes. My guy in back (GIB), my IWSO in the back seat, was doing a great job keeping me informed of our attitude and position. Of course, by now it's dark—we're in heavy rain—lightning's going off all around us, and. . .well, let's just say I'm off my routine. I was on Lead's right wing when—surprise—I lost sight of him. Unfortunately, we were in a right turn at the end of the holding pattern at the time, so I followed "Lost Wingman" procedures, which put us rolling off to the right at reduced power—a maneuver which put us into an increasingly diving turn.

But we never got that far—a massive bolt of lightning went off within what seemed like arm's reach; I reflex-jerked my head to look, and at about the same time, the cockpit lights blinked a couple of times. When I snapped my head back into the cockpit, everything looked wrong. I was sure the lightning had damaged something because I saw OFF flags, and the ball (attitude indicator) was all black with the lines turning fast at odd angles. I thought, "This is all wrong," and moved my head to better see the peanut (a small—real small and hard to see—standby attitude indicator) down low between my knees.

I made three head movements (the physiology people call them vestibular inputs) in a matter of seconds. . .com-

By now it's dark—we're in heavy rain—lightning's going off all around us, and. . .well, let's just say I'm off my routine.

Later I learned my GIB had rotated the command ejection selector and was just about to blow us both out when I started talking.

bined with no visual references—lightning—turbulence. . .let's just say my spatial orientation wasn't real hot. And by now, the GIB is screaming at me, but I'm not listening. I was super confused . . .I couldn't keep my eyes focused or keep them looking at one thing long enough to accurately interpret anything (Somatogyral Nystagmus Illusions—I think the docs call it).

I remember a loud howling noise filtering through, and it hit me—had to be from high speed. I pulled the throttles to idle and popped the boards. Suddenly, all I could hear was my very first IP in the T-37 program hollering in my face time and again, ***"Trust Your Attitude Indicator! Trust It—Chances Are There's Nothing Wrong With It!"*** I could actually see his face—scary. The human brain is truly superior to any Pentium yet built.

By the way, this whole incident only lasted seconds—at least until I came to my senses, concentrated on the now-righted attitude indicator, rolled the wings level, and started pulling the stick with both hands. Now I could hear my GIB, and I immediately told him, "OK, OK, I've got it." We bottomed out under control at about 8,000 ft. Later I learned my GIB had rotated the command ejection selector and was just about to blow us both out when I started talking. High-speed ejections have low success rates (but distinctly higher than corkscrewing into

the ground), so we were lucky I got my head together when I did. Of course, this was still too slow since several seconds of turning descent in a high-performance aircraft uses up a bunch of altitude.

Typically, the rest of the flight to landing was relatively uneventful, but my eyes were still jumping and jiggling, making concentration very hard.

Before this incident, I was your typical, cocky fighter jock. I had this confident, bulletproof attitude that what I felt in my head and body was absolutely correct; granted, my thought processes were not incredibly clear at the time, but my initial questioning of my instruments cost me extremely valuable time—another 12-15 seconds, and we could've been the proverbial smokin' hole. My first IP really saved the day for me (I never thought I'd admit that) and my GIB, just as you IPs out there can have a heavy impact on your students. Someday your students will listen to you—make them glad they did.

It also helps to listen to the weather people—especially when they start talking thunderstorms. While the storm didn't exactly eat my jet, it certainly contributed to the fact that my GIB and I were almost toast.

At least I'm lucky enough to have lived to be an excellent example for physiology lessons—how highly-proficient, physically healthy, and highly-experienced crewmembers can get in big trouble because they think they're disorientation bulletproof.

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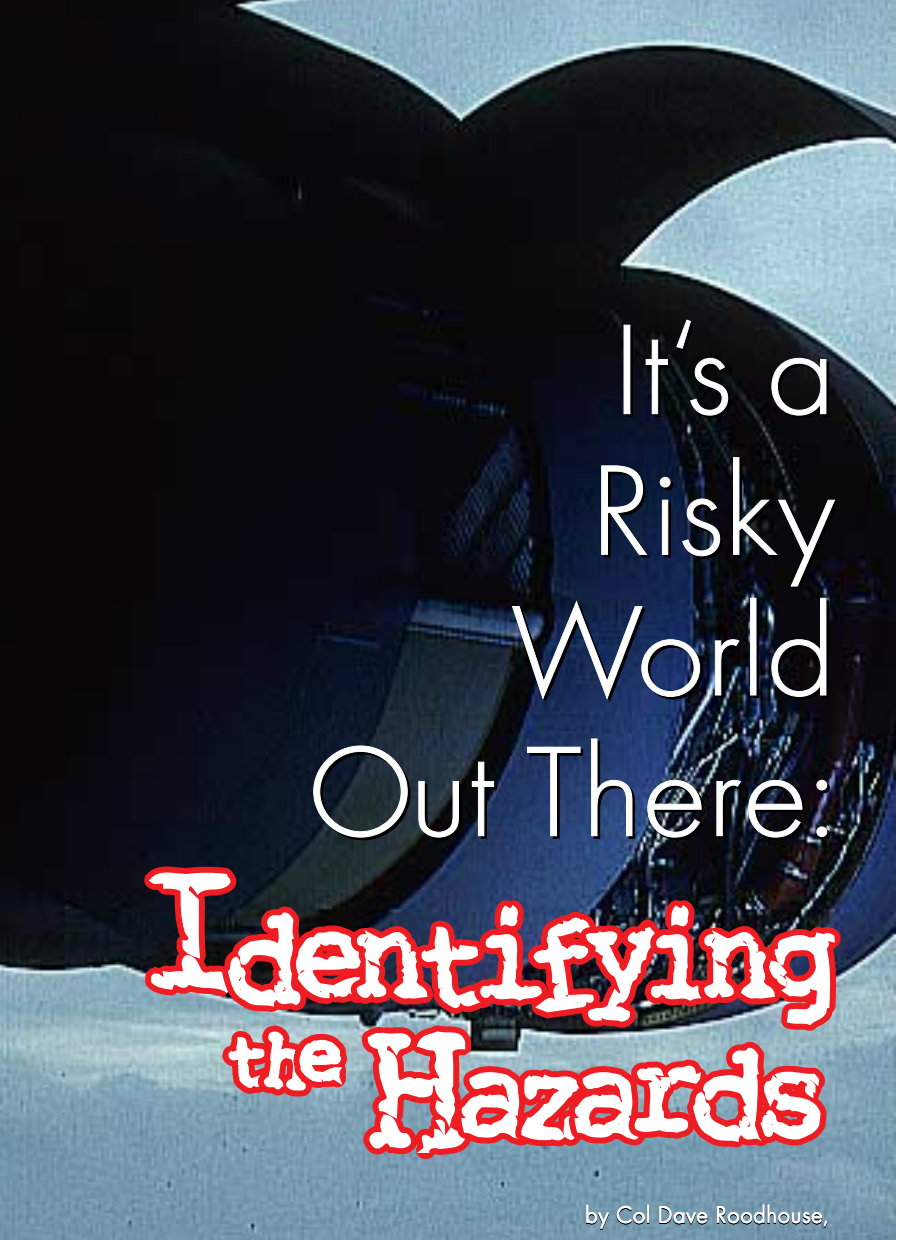

by MSgt Fernando Serna, AFRS

It's a Risky World Out There:

Identifying the Hazards

by Col Dave Roodhouse,
HQ AETC/SEV, Randolph AFB

As some may recall, last month we introduced the basic concepts of Operational Risk Management. We discussed the four basic rules: ***(1)*** *know the risks,* ***(2)*** *accept no unnecessary risk,* ***(3)*** *make risk decisions at the appropriate level, and* ***(4)*** *accept risk when benefits outweigh costs.*

We also highlighted the six steps of the risk management process: ***(1)*** *hazard identification,* ***(2)*** *risk assessment,* ***(3)*** *risk control options,* ***(4)*** *make a risk decision,* ***(5)*** *implement, and* ***(6)*** *supervise.* This article dives into more detail on the first of these six steps — hazard identification.

I can just envision creases of worry furrowing some brows out there in Safetyland. This is already starting to get pretty deep, and we're just barely out of the starting blocks. Fortunately, our resources have been bolstered by the latest addition to the ranks of superherodom — Captain ORM. You know the type: chiseled features; jutting jaw; piercing, steely eyes; deep, well-modulated voice; and high muscle definition. Our blue-suited paragon of virtue marshals many resources in the fight against evil, or in our case, that nasty, risky world out there.

"So Captain, where do we begin?"

"Well, Col Roodhouse, as any superhero knows, you have to identify the important stuff first. What's at risk? What's so essential to the mission its loss could jeopardize success? For my bud Superman, that might be keeping the green

by MSgt Dave Nolan

kryptonite locked up in a lead vault. You get the idea. A key factor here: those closest to the action are in the best position to know what's critical to mission success. Now I happen to know we have all sorts of superheroes in our very own Air Force, so your experience, training, judgment, and intuition are great sources for identifying risks to the mission. Of course, even superheroes need some outside help from time to time, so here are some other ideas on how you can identify hazards (and before you gag on this one, you ought to check out the list you have to memorize to enter Superhero Academy):

❖ ***Written guidance:*** *instructions, manuals, standards, procedures, checklists, OIs, TOs.*

❖ ***Reports:*** *inspections, surveys, evaluations, crossfeed, safety reports, hazard reports, close calls, staff assistance visits, trend analysis, Quality Air Force assessments, bioenvironmental reports, site surveys.*

❖ ***Lessons learned:*** *after-action reports, accident investigation/mishap reports, medical reports, analysis of rehearsals.*

❖ ***Change:*** *Abnormal situations, breaks in routine.*

❖ ***Scenario thinking:*** *what can go wrong, what ifs, worst case scenario development.*

❖ ***Unit-level evaluators:*** *quality assurance, standardization, evaluation.*

❖ ***Expert opinion:*** *maintenance, technical, intelligence."*

"A key factor here: those closest to the action are in the best position to know what's critical to mission success."

by MSgt Rose S. Reynolds, *Airman*

"Whew! Good thing we wrote all this down so we don't have to burn too many brain cells, Captain ORM. I'm sure our highly astute readers quickly realized most of the sources you talked about are historical in nature. . . experiential/intuitive in ORM lingo. That's good. We need to learn from our experiences. But tell me Captain, how can we force our time horizon out beyond our next coffee break?"

"We need to learn from our experiences."

"That's easier than you think. It turns out the ORM gurus have assembled 26 different techniques and tools for identifying hazards, many of which look at future operations and drive beyond the direct experiences of those involved. For instance, a process like this had to be involved in the first space shuttle reentry. All sorts of testing and "what if" analysis had been done, but nobody had any direct experience with little ceramic tiles pasted to the bottom of a space plane or the effects of re-entry on those tiles. We just didn't know for sure. Anyhow, some of the tools are meant for use by folks out on the line, while others require some specialized training. The bottom line, Col R, is we take a hard look at the operation around us to find the risks before they cause mishaps."

"Thanks, Captain ORM; we certainly appreciate your time."

"Always glad to help, Col R. Well, I'm off to uncover risk wherever it may be hiding."

Wow, what a guy! We'll have more on the tools in a later article, but the main categories we'll be discussing are analysis of past events, inspections and interviews, scenarios, and diagramming.

Congratulations. Your stamina alone identifies you as a candidate for Superhero Academy. Of course, we knew it all along! Next month, we'll see how we do risk assessment on the hazards we worked so hard to identify.

Until we meet again, the Captain says, "Being a superhero is mostly a state of mind."

Ed. Note – We've long suspected a close connection between a certain mild-mannered Colonel here at safety and that daring risk-crusher, Captain ORM. While we have no positive proof they are one-and-the-same, the personal tone of the last sentence clearly shows there's more afoot here than just a common interest in keeping you safe (besides, Colonel Roodhouse writes too well to be just an ordinary joe). Further information to follow as our investigation continues.

by MSgt Dave Nolan

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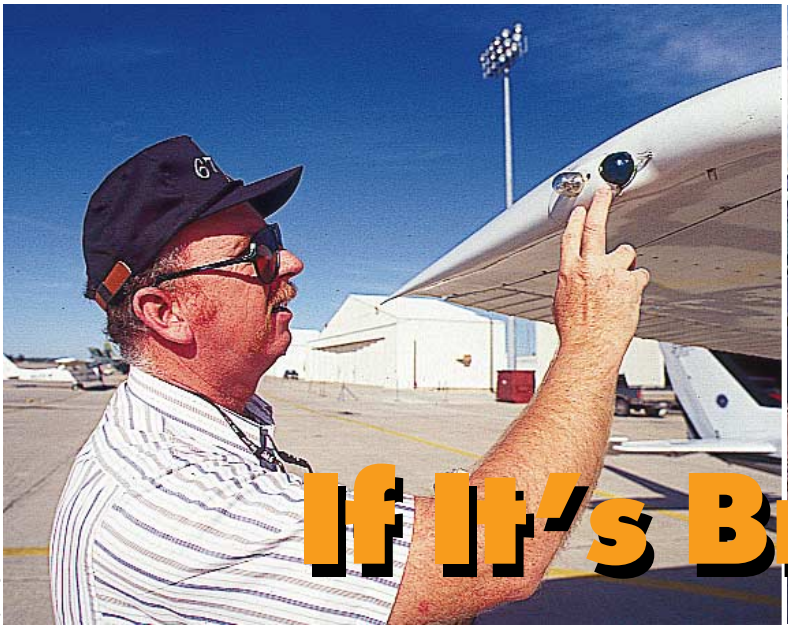


by MSgt Dave Nolan

If It's Broke, Don

Pilot Boyd Belcher preflights a USAF Aero Club Cessna 152 at Kelly AFB, TX.

by Capt Tony Wurmstein, 619th TRSS/IDO, Randolph AFB

I could start this story with the old *Dragnet* line about the names being changed to protect the innocent, but I've really left some out to protect the guilty. This particular story is about civilian pilots in a civilian aircraft, but it applies to anyone who flies for fun or a living.

"It's still attached. . .let's fly."

My friend and I got out of class (a small mid-western college) early on a Friday afternoon, and having both been bitten by the flying bug, we drove to the airport and pulled "our" blue Cessna 152 out of the hangar. We didn't own the plane, but we had a mutual friend who was generous enough to let us fly it for the cost of fuel. This being a better than fantastic deal, we took advantage of it often.

We'd been flying together for quite some time, so we shared the preflight; I did the left side, and he did the right. As I worked out along the leading edge to the wing tip, I noticed the plastic wing tip was abraded, and I found a hairline crack running from the leading edge back to the tip light. I pulled on the tip, and it seemed to be attached to the airplane as well as it should've been. I knew this damage hadn't been there two days before (when we'd last flown), so I called my buddy over to have a look. He pulled on the tip, just as I had done, and said, "It's still attached. . .let's fly." With this cursory examination of the damage complete, we hopped in, fired it up, and taxied out.

Our typical flight consisted of seeing if we could find any interesting points of performance or stability the test engineers at Cessna had overlooked: stalls, spins, high-g recoveries, and high-banking maneuvers until our gas started getting low. This day was really no different.

The next afternoon, as I was thinking of going back to the airport to see if

by MSgt Dave Nolan

by chance the view from the air had changed, I got a call from my flying buddy telling me someone had crashed "our" plane — our good deal was over!

We made some calls and found out it had happened shortly after we'd put the plane away. Apparently, the left wing spar snapped during takeoff rotation; thankfully, the pilot wasn't hurt, but the plane was totaled. I started to get an uneasy feeling, but it wasn't enough to make me lose sleep.

But it really hit me the following day. I got a look at the pictures the airport manager had taken the night of the accident. The left wing was broken right at the brace, and it was almost neatly folded over the back of the fuselage, attached only by the sheet metal. The landing gear was also broken, and the prop was bent.

Before we flew, it seems two other so-and-sos had high-speed-taxied the left wing into the hanger door which they'd failed to roll all the way back. They then put the plane back, hoping no one would notice the damage. Despite seeing the damage, we took the airplane and really wrung it out, straining and fatiguing the wing spar until all it took was one last load to make it fail. One more touch-and-go, one more hard turn, one more stall. . .both of us could've been dead. That night I didn't sleep well at all.

My friend and I had developed a serious lack of respect for the risks involved in the aerospace environment. Our "culture of non-compliance" allowed us to fly this obviously damaged airplane to the limit of its capabilities and probably beyond our own. A lack of discipline led to a bad risk decision which almost cost us our lives. Don't let the fun get the best of good judgment. There isn't a recreational or training sortie worth dying for — if it's broke, don't fly it!

by SrA Andrew N. Dunaway II, CC

One more touch-and-go, one more hard turn, one more stall. . .both of us could've been dead.

A Foggy Reality Check

by Mr. Lloyd R. Palmer,
559th FTS/SE,
Randolph AFB

How many of us are really aware of the difference between the theory and reality sides of driving safety?

The theory says most of us consider ourselves good, safe drivers. After all, we don't go around jumping 20 buses on a motorcycle or evading the sheriff on high speed chases through swamps. But reality too often rears its ugly head when we do those slightest of unsafe acts without ever really thinking about them — you know, the little things we all know are not totally safe, but we've done them for years and come away unscathed. We don't think about the consequences because we've grown accustomed to the comfort level. How often have you driven through a residential area at greater than the posted speed? How about driving on that worn tire just a few more miles? Or maybe steering with your knees so you could scarf down that cup of coffee and doughnut? We laugh — but we've all done these things, sometimes with very close calls. It's harder to laugh, however, when we hear about the child who was hit because some "good" driver was doing something stupid.

This idea smacked me in the face while I was driving on the interstate late one night. Needless to say, in good Mario Andretti fashion, I was making good time. All of a sudden, a fog bank appeared out of nowhere. Now, you know how it is when you're cruising along with no interference and making "good time." I thought, "I should pop out of this real soon." Well, luckily I did, but the real soon was seven minutes — roughly seven miles — later. Then reality started sinking in deep: what if there'd been a stalled car or large ani-

mal in the middle of the road? Not a very funny thought.

Let's take this point further. Another theory says accidents happen to other people because they don't know how to drive — "they" don't. Who exactly is this they? This they is really all of us because all drivers are susceptible to the uninvited accident when fog is involved. And virtually every fog-related accident has excessive speed as a factor — notice I said excessive, not illegal. Depending on visibility and road conditions, doing 35 in a 55 zone may be too fast for your reactions to handle an approaching disaster. I've been in fog so thick pulling off the road and stopping was the only safe thing to do.

Does anyone remember the 100+ car pile-up in November of 94 in San Antonio, TX? Combine a simple accident with fog, wet roads, and people going the speed limit or faster, and many people became traffic accident statistics. Local authorities said if the people involved in the accident had just been driving a little slower, most of the wrecks could've been avoided. You see, nobody got up that morning thinking, "I'll bet my unsafe attitudes toward driving are going to catch up with me today. Let's go find a fog bank and see what happens." Nevertheless, reality reached out and pulled them in.

We all need to use a little more sense when it comes to the reality involved in unsafe acts and attitudes with our driving. In the flying world, pilots always check their six o'clock position to make sure they're not going to be taken by surprise. You need to take a look in the rear-view mirror before you turn the key — do a reality check of your driving before reality sneaks up on you.

Depending on visibility and road conditions, doing 35 in a 55 zone may be too fast for your reactions to handle an approaching disaster.

The Trouble U

by Maj Mark Carter

There seems to be a certain narrow-mindedness out there. . .perhaps it's a species thing — I don't know. We all, individually and collectively, know what's right and what's best. We've all seen it every day of our lives: anything I make, create, produce is best; it's somebody else's (anybody else's) fault; the way I've compartmentalized the world is correct (and don't you dare expect me to change). We all know truth, at least our own truth, because rarely are our perceptions of the truth wrong — at least in our own minds. Unfortunately, this type of thinking tends to get us in trouble, especially when it comes to risk and safety.

The main truth we seem to have trouble with involves our perceptions of our own safety: I'm certainly safe; you're usually safe; but the other person, that nebulous someone else, really bears watching. After all, I certainly don't do things which are really unsafe. Sure, I may speed a little every once in a while, but that's harmless — everyone does it — it's like a white lie. . .no one really gets hurt. But that other guy. . . you know, the one who goes zipping by you doing at least 70 in a 55 zone. . .there's the accident waiting to happen. But is that other driver really that much different than you are? Of course he or she is — because you are safe; you know you're safe — right?

With The Truth

The same truth seems to work its way into our higher-risk activities (as if our morning commute isn't risky enough). I can hear it already. . .I'm safe — nothing's going to happen to me (on a personal note, I'll grudgingly admit I'm beyond the immortality of youth phase, but I'm just as sure the idea of immortality as myth will still come as a deny-at-all-costs surprise to some of you out there; sorry to burst your bubble, but in this case, there is no tooth fairy; however, you may be your own bogey man) — but that other guy's always going to do something stupid, not pay attention, forget his equipment, take risks, get himself hurt. Not me — him. I mean, really, I don't walk tight-ropes, get shot out of cannons, or tame lions. I just play street hockey occasionally, ride my mountain bike, ski on vacation, ride a horse every once in a while, water ski sometimes. . .nothing really dangerous. For Pete's sake, this is stuff kids do all the time. I'm an adult; I think about what I'm doing; I'm safe. . .the problem is these perceptions tend to make people complacent when it comes to risk and protecting themselves.

OK, let's take a look at this "I'm safe" perception for a minute. So you play a little street hockey, do you? Nothing dangerous, right? Hello — playing hockey, even street hockey, can be an intense, high-risk activity. Street hockey's based on ice hockey. . .and ice hockey players wear protective equipment — do you?

Think about it — place six competitive players (if you're not feeling competitive when the game starts, you probably are before it's over) — usually young men with appropriate testosterone levels and that immortality thing going for them — on a sheet of ice bounded by walls of ply-

Air Force seniors Steve Maturo, Pat Kielb, and Todd Lafortune (l. to r.) display their protective hockey equipment.

by Maj Mark Carter

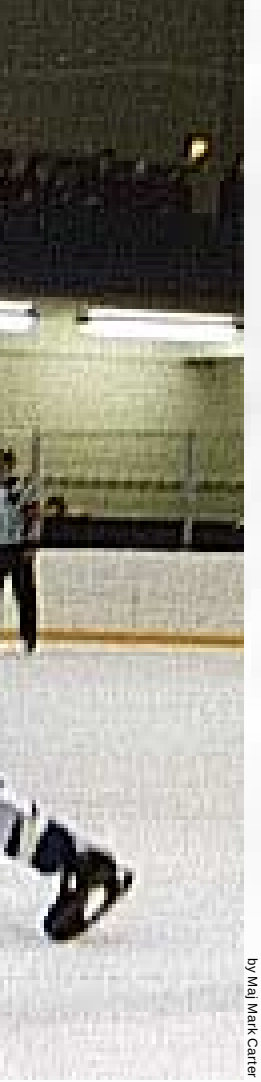
"They employ rules and refs and require the use of protective equipment for good reasons: to help control the chaos. . .and the injuries."

wood and Plexiglas; put sharpened steel skates on their feet which will let them move at speeds of 15-30 mph; give them wooden sticks; and tell them to chase a 3-inch piece of hard, iced rubber around the ice until they shoot it, at speeds of 75-95 mph, into a goal. Oh, I almost forgot — add six other players of like abilities and attitudes who take it as a personal insult that the other group has "their" puck. The combination often makes for a miniature civil, just as often uncivil, war. Organized leagues, colleges, pros—they employ rules and refs and require the use of protective equipment for good reasons: to help control the chaos . . .and the injuries.

But you're not a pro—you don't even pretend to be a college star. You just get together with your buds for a little fun. Besides, street hockey and ice hockey aren't really the same; they're just similar.

You're absolutely right — and wrong. You're right — you're probably really neither a pro nor a star, but I'd be willing to bet you've had stars in your eyes, fantasies of greatness, at least once in your life. We've all been bitten by the competition bug, even us old fogies. We've all tried to play beyond our age, physical ability, and skill level (and this by no means just applies to street hockey) — hopefully with no irreparable damage. But then again, you're always safe.

In this truth, however, you may be absolutely wrong as well. Your in-lines and shots may not generate the same speeds, but you can still get up a pretty good head of steam. And those rubber balls and pucks still smart, particularly when they strike certain shall we say delicate parts of your anatomy (and this certainly isn't something just the guys have to be aware of). Of course, the concrete or asphalt you



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play on is much softer than ice, right? Your pain may also be the only referee around to call you for being out of control during your street hockey game — too often, our not being invincible is a painful truth to learn.

What other truths are we dealing with here?

Ever ridden that bike without a helmet? How about tackled a trail which was just a bit beyond your physical abilities or skill level? Push it a little bit keeping up with those youngsters (that 20-year-old's got nothing on you)? What about forgetting to bring along the water? The correct answers should be no, no, no, and no, but are they the truthful answers — sorry, I forgot . . .only someone else would do those things.

Are you really skilled enough, experienced enough, fit enough to handle that advanced ski trail? Here's a hint—one set of lessons and three trips down the bunny hill does not make you ready for a black diamond run. How's your equipment? Are you prepared in case you get lost on the trails? The truth is it happens — even if you know you're safe.

Ask Christopher Reeve about how safe riding a horse can be, and he was experienced and properly equipped. But even kids ride horses, so it must be safe.

Oh yeah. . .almost forgot water skiing. You take a couple lessons, and certainly you're ready to try that barefoot thing — maybe do a few flips, or better yet, do some flips as you go over that neat ski jump. Sounds like the safe thing to do to me, especially after you've had a few beers.

Please, you're really not Superman or Wonder Woman — enjoy your activities, but lose the mind set that you don't have to worry about protecting yourself, or the ones you love, from injury because those sorts of things only happen to that someone else.

I'm not trying to ruin your fun — life would be pretty dull if we didn't take risks. We all enjoy a good rush (and I'm definitely not talking about Mr. TV), and we all are certainly entitled to enjoy the activities which make us happy. But we do need to be honest, at least with ourselves, about the risks which exist in our activities. The accident waiting to happen is not always the other person's. No one is always safe — that's the real truth about our lives. Across the country, emergency rooms and lost work time attest to our regard for our perceptions of our own invulnerability and our disregard for risk. Perhaps it's time we worked on our perceptions — so we can identify, acknowledge, and prepare for the risks.

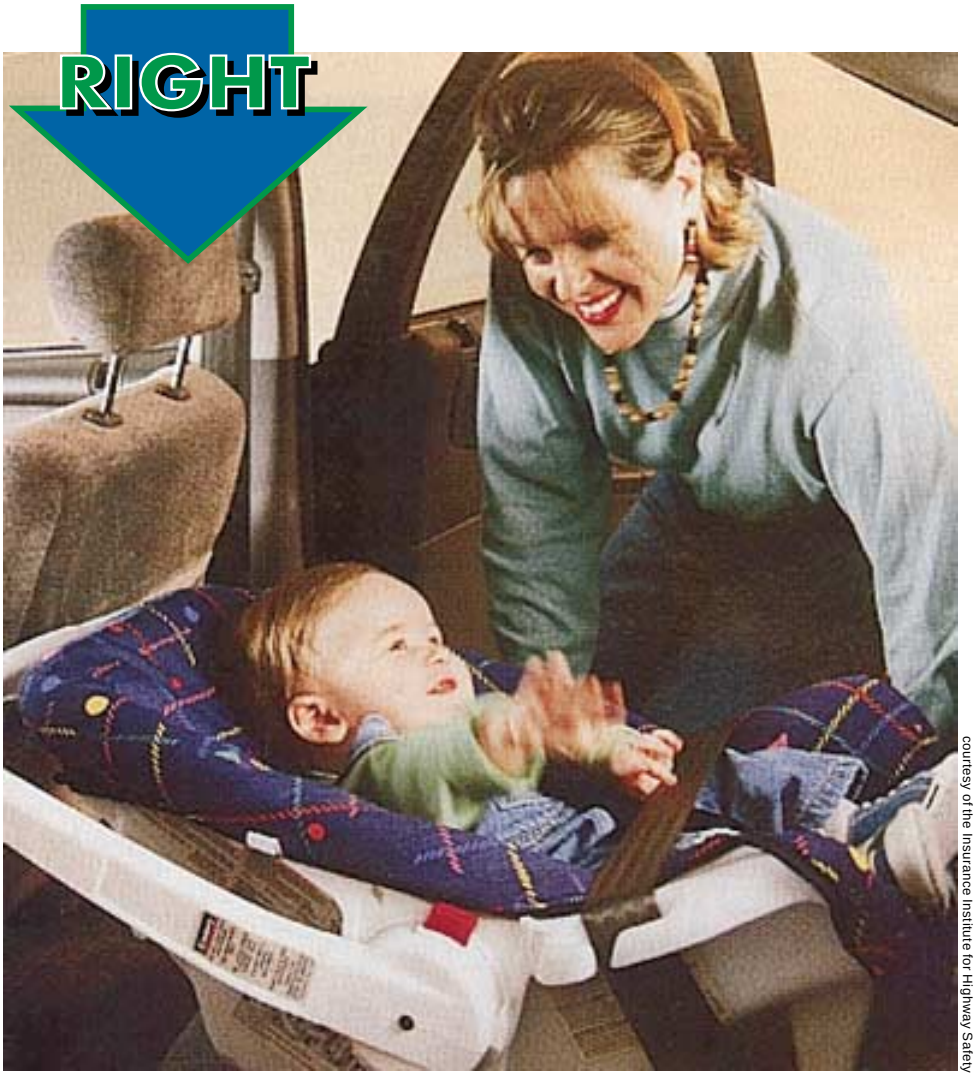
Have fun, but take the right precautions, use the right equipment, give the risks the respect they deserve.

Shouldn't you be wearing a riding helmet, cowboy?

Playing It Safe With Airbags

by Maj Mark Carter

The recent controversy surrounding children and airbags has left many people confused and scared. Airbags have been credited with saving well over 1000 lives in the past 10 years, and beginning in 1999, driver and passenger-side airbags will be required in all passenger vehicles and trucks. On its own, this sounds wonderful, but the down side, the side worrying many parents of small children, is airbags are blamed in the deaths of at least 30 children over that same 10-year period. A safety device, which is about to become standard equipment, that can apparently kill children — what's a parent to do?



courtesy of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

The first thing we as parents must do is take responsibility — we have the power to decide where and how our children ride in our vehicles. Airbags, at least at this time, are not thinking mechanisms. They simply sense a collision and inflate, usually with an explosive force of up to 200 mph. They don't care who's in the seat or whether or not that person is secure. The caring has to come in through the parent. You have to care that your child is safely seatbelted. You have to care that your infant's carseat is secured in the middle of the back seat.

With or without airbags in vehicles, the back seat, undoubtedly, has always been the safest place for a child to ride.

courtesy of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

Always make sure your children are buckled in, preferably in the back seat, and never place a child's carseat in the front passenger seat — airbag or not, it simply isn't worth the risk.

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I know — little Johnny doesn't like to wear his seatbelt, so it's easier on you to let him roam around the car than listen to his fits; it's more convenient for you to have little Janie's carseat in the front passenger seat, and you even have her seat facing the rear per the seat's instructions. Something to think about — the majority of those children killed in airbag incidents were not buckled in or were riding in the front seat.

Please take responsibility by making sure your child is buckled in properly in the safest position possible.

A safe, healthy, uninjured child is worth all the inconvenience in the world.

NAGC honors TORCH

The National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) recently awarded ***"First Place"*** honors to **TORCH** in its 1996 International Blue Pencil Awards for magazines with an internal audience. We're extremely pleased NAGC has recognized our hard work, but we need to emphasize the "our" speaks to the combination of the **TORCH** staff and you, the *"folks in the field"* who submit articles and provide feedback.

Without you, there would almost certainly be no magazine to nominate for an award, let alone a quality magazine to win one.

Keep the articles and feedback coming – we can't do our part unless you do yours.

Thanx for keeping the **TORCH** burning brightly.

Congratulations, and thanx once again to Capt Ken Murray.

– The **TORCH** Staff